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## Building a French for Business and Technology Program Abroad: Giving Students an Edge in an Expanding Global Job Market

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Lionel J. Lemarchand

**BUILDING A FRENCH FOR BUSINESS AND  
TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM ABROAD:  
GIVING STUDENTS AN EDGE  
IN AN EXPANDING GLOBAL JOB MARKET**

**ABSTRACT**

The reality of globalization has made international programs more significant than ever before. Students from all over the world are accessing an increasingly competitive world market. Understanding other cultures in the social sense and in the business culture sense is crucial not only for their own benefits but also for their careers. This article describes how to develop an “Abroad Business and Technology Program” and presents the principal components that can insure its success. It also states the benefits that the students themselves realized they had acquired.

The drive to internationalize higher education has increased in recent years. As the reality of globalization has become clearer, so has the demand for programs responding to this expanded awareness. Institutions are responding to this growing demand by creating a variety of study abroad programs, which are gaining more recognition and credit. They are not only significant because “there is an unwritten understanding that crossing cultures is one of the most meaningful educational experiences available to college students” (Stimpf, 63). They are also meaningful in a practical sense, as the primary students’ concern toward the end of their college career is to find a good job. This often carries an international connotation.

In the fall of 1999, implementing the vision of accelerating and expanding the internationalization of Georgia Tech, the School of Modern Languages initiated the development of a program in French for Business and Technology programs (FBT) in France. We will highlight some of the factors triggering the necessity for such programs and will describe the different steps of the process involved in determining some of the choices that were made for the program. Various facets of the program that address different needs in the learning process will also be highlighted. Former students’ testimonials will show the growing need for these types of programs

and the actual benefits and impacts they have on young careers in a global job market.

Before developing a successful program (beneficial and satisfactory to both students and institution), it is important to find the answers to these simple but crucial questions: Why do students want to study abroad? Why should they? Why should a university develop, offer, and reward such programs?

#### WHY ORGANIZE A LANGUAGE FOR A “BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY” PROGRAM?

For detailed information about the “numerous compelling reasons to encourage students to participate in a study abroad experience” such as the improved results concerning language acquisition and the students’ increased sociocultural and intercultural competence as well as “the personal and academic benefits of these experiences,” we refer to the sources provided by Barbara Freed (Freed, 3) in *Frontiers: The Journal for Study Abroad Programs*. We focus our attention on the benefits resulting from the business and technology aspects of the programs.

English-only speakers will find themselves at a competitive disadvantage for a growing number of U.S. jobs in coming years as employers ply global markets. Being monolingual is about as American as football, but foreign language fluency is an increasingly significant asset. (“Foreign-Language Fluency”)

Being able to use a specialized vocabulary in particular business situations requires much more specific training, in which students can experience and learn the business culture of the country in which they study. While their competition may be able to communicate in a target language with a business acquaintance, those individuals who have acquired the special vocabulary of the field will have the “unfair” advantage of being a step ahead and actually dealing with a future business partner. Not only will a foreign interlocutor likely be more impressed with individuals who have been exposed to a different work environment, but at the domestic level, human resources directors will also consider this an advantage in hiring personnel. They are conscious of the fact that not only has globalization made the world smaller and more competitive for everyone on the planet but also that we, in the United States, all have to face the reality that Asia, South America, and an expanding European Union (in size and in economical and political power)

have increasingly become major factors of the American economy and business environment.

There has been an ongoing shift of powers in the world that had traditionally been largely in favor of the United States since the end of World War II. Even though for decades after the world conflict, America was accustomed to holding control of the world market, this is no longer the scenario. This situation has recently, and painfully, been highlighted by the fluctuation of the American stock market as major events, business related or not, occur in other countries. Our lives and economies are indeed interconnected with others' on the planet whether we like it or not, and we will personally have to deal with individuals from other countries who live in a different cultural reality.

De Wit and Knight have shown that internationalization of higher education is not a new concept. But even though it dates back to the Middle Ages, the concept seems to have taken a long time to develop on a larger scale. Thanks in great part to the technological and communication advances and to the exchanges of products and ideas on a wide scale across the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the northern and southern borders of the United States, new generations of students and scholars who are coming up through the ranks are much more aware of the positive potential of globalization (or its inevitability) on our still competitive but not as sturdy economic power. Most administrators with vision have taken extremely seriously this recent trend in mutual international influence, particularly in our case in the business sector. They have realized the role that American universities can play in shaping the future players who may, in a not-so-distant future and if given the opportunity, hold new key roles on the international business scene. Since our students are well aware of market expansion, they feel the need to gain international experience, to attempt to bridge the gap between cultural differences, and to acquire in-depth language skills that allow them to increase their aptitude to communicate across cultures.

In working in a global environment, being aware of other cultures and how they do business is always important even when your daily work deals mostly with domestic clients or issues. Everyday, you are faced with issues that deal with clashing business cultures, these can be domestic or international companies, and you need an open mind to learn how "foreign" business culture works. I feel like I can bring a more open or different perspective because of the experience I had with Lyon and by seeing how different

companies have different cultures and ways to work. (Leah Corgel, FBT 2000)

Through this kind of experience students also have a chance to acquire some confidence while achieving a certain level of independence in a multicultural setting. These learning opportunities also may offer new vocational ideas and inspiration to students.

As mentioned earlier, it is especially relevant for some engineering students to see how technology is integrated and used in companies abroad. Such knowledge provides a sense of the talent level of engineers in foreign countries and an indicator of how developed their expertise is in various branches of the industry. It may spark ideas that they would not have had without traveling outside the United States. The fact that they are immersed in a very social context is also somewhat new for some students and taking classes with non-engineering majors can be eye opening. One relational problem that still exists in many companies in the States is that of the communication gap between engineers and other departments. Learning to cooperate and work on various projects with students from different educational backgrounds, different disciplines, and different institutions is extremely positive for all (engineers and non-engineers). They usually develop a camaraderie that they would never have suspected could exist.

This program allowed me to experience Lyon and France on a much deeper level than [as] a mere tourist and understand a different perspective, not only the French but also the perspective of my colleagues on the trip. (Paul Ross, FBT 2003)

The cultural benefits are therefore doubled by this experience abroad. Today's students can become tomorrow's business leaders not just on a national scale but on a global international level. International business programs will improve their career prospects and give them the social and language skills necessary to interact in a cross-cultural work environment.

#### WHY ORGANIZE IT ABROAD?

Even though many people manage to acquire a certain fluency in a language without ever setting foot in the countries where it is spoken, it is clear that in order to really communicate in a language you have to "live it," therefore making an immersion setting the principal means to acquire these necessary communication skills. The cultural experience and the prolonged constant

exposure to the native environment exponentially accelerate the improvement of accent, oral fluency, aural comprehension, and understanding of the culture itself.

Having access to another language is more than just knowing more words. It is access to new concepts, new ideas, and a way to understand another culture. That is something that came out of the FBT program that I value tremendously and that will never go away. (Tali Padan, FBT 2001)

Furthermore, it is the only way that one can overcome what Edward and Mildred Hall, two cultural anthropologists, call “hidden codes” (Hall, xvi). Besides the language, there exists a conversational style that carries as much meaning sometimes as the words themselves. One may translate perfectly well what interlocutors say, yet not understand or interpret correctly what is meant. This notion is especially important during business negotiations in which it is necessary to make certain that both parties perfectly understand each other. These impalpable differences between literal and figurative language to a non-native can only be learned in a real-life setting because they are extremely difficult if not impossible to stage.

There is also a whole ritual surrounding business dealings that varies from one culture to another and that can only become familiar by spending time in that country. One obvious example is the way North Africans handle a purchase or a sale. Speaking French in Tunisia, which most Tunisians understand and speak as the second spoken language after Arabic, will not prepare somebody for the haggling that has to be done before leaving with a product (its price has been set purposely high in anticipation of bargaining). Another example would be that the French approach to business deals is usually not as direct as the American approach. Before talking about the specifics of a meeting, it is usual practice when dealing with a French person to talk at some length about the international, political, or sporting events of the day or even family matters. Sticking strictly to business would be considered cold and even rude in some cases. The human connection is much more important than it usually is during similar exchanges between two Americans. Most of the Latin countries share the same unwritten rule. There are many more subtle differences between cultures, even when they share a common language, which can influence the outcome of a negotiation. They may not make or break the deal, but can certainly lose it to the competition that is aware of these subtleties. This is a concept well grasped and summed up by a former student:

The program teaches you to be tolerant of foreign cultures. The lessons learned span both personal and business aspects of my life. Different cultures result in many different thought processes and I have learned to approach every situation from more than one angle. On a more personal level, it taught me how to communicate with people, which will translate well into any business situation. (Matt Watkins, FBT 2001)

The attitude that “everyone speaks English” is fortunately fading away. Even if others do speak English “doing business with someone who is fluent and sympathetic to your culture is preferable and more comfortable socially. In this sense the ability to speak the language of potential business partners or clients is a strategic advantage that increases in value as markets become more global in nature” (Eldestein, 5). The rapid increase in proficiency in a foreign situation is also catalyzed by a motivation factor that only a situation such as facing daily challenges in a foreign environment can provide. Year-long programs are the ideal setting for the students to acquire the knowledge of intercultural communication, but short, well-organized programs such as the one described here can also be very efficient, meaningful, and valuable, since students have many opportunities to interact with native speakers and are immersed in the target language as often as possible.

#### HOW TO CHOOSE A COUNTRY FOR THE PROGRAM?

It is not always superfluous to point out that despite a common language, different countries have completely different cultures and business cultures. One of the first questions that the project manager should ask himself or herself, the potential participants, and administrators is: what is the international working environment ultimately targeted? With which countries or which part of the world would most of the students likely want to be involved? If the organizer is a native of the target country and already has connections there, it tremendously facilitates the process and also heavily influences the decision. The geographical situation, the proximity to the southern or northern border, the east coast or west coast can play an influential role in the preference. The safety issue has to be addressed, and it is a good idea to check the US Department of State Web site before engaging in this endeavor, as some countries are not recommended for travel. The closeness of the country can play a role not only because of the familiarity and the more frequent exchanges (commercial and others) between the two regions, but also because of the second most important and deciding factor: the cost to the student. A French for business and technology program is cheaper to

develop in Quebec than in France, just as a Spanish program is perhaps cheaper to develop in Mexico than in Spain. It is crucial to calculate the minimum number of students that will guarantee the viability of the program. Depending on the student population, the cost is often a determinant in students' final decision.

#### HOW TO CHOOSE A CITY FOR THE PROGRAM?

The choice of the city is essential and dictated by two indispensable sets of components. The first one concerns the basic infrastructure needed for running any serious and efficient study abroad program, such as: classroom space, housing, restaurant facilities, and transportation. Even though the first conditions narrow the field of possibilities quite a bit, it is a fact that numerous cities in all of the target countries fulfill these criteria. The second set of deciding components relates to all the particular needs associated with a language, business, and technology program, such as: the availability of cultural activities, a variety of businesses represented in the area (mainly ones using modern technology), a pool of accessible guest speakers, and a possibility of interaction with native speakers outside the regular, planned schedule. Good transportation connectivity to the rest of the country or a central location is also a decisive advantage. This selection process helps eliminate many cities that would have appeared to be good choices at first glance.

If the city is too small, it will be impossible to combine all of these elements without some travel. Group traveling has to be kept to a minimum. Travel as a group is synonymous with time not spent in immersion; worse, it is the occasion to revert to the native language, which has to be avoided at all cost, especially during the official hours of organized tasks and, as much as possible, at other times. There are also risks involved in selecting a city that is too big. It may be too "touristy," and many people may be used to automatically speaking or responding in English to foreign visitors. Areas that are not clearly delimited to a person unfamiliar with the surroundings and the culture may not be safe. The students may not feel as comfortable in an environment that is overwhelming, and some of them may not be as adventurous as others, thus reducing their cultural experience. Even though it is not impossible to do so, a lot of supplemental efforts are needed by the organizer to avert some of these potential problems.

For our specific project, many cities in France could have been excellent candidates and very adaptable to its development because they have both the basic infrastructure and the added necessary components mentioned earlier.



Lille, Strasbourg, Aix-en-Provence come to mind as examples. Here are some of the factors that led to the choice of Lyon as the site of the Georgia Tech program.

#### LYON, THE CITY OF CHOICE

As the second largest city in France (close in numbers to Marseille), Lyon has a much more manageable size than Paris, yet it offers many of the same advantages. The center of the city is extremely well connected by metro, bus, and tramways. One is never more than ten to fifteen minutes away from one end of the city limit or the other. This situation is extremely appreciated by students year after year:

Lyon can be described by the friendliness and openness of the people, quaintness of a large city, and overall safety in comparison to other cities of its size. The city provided many views into its ancient Roman roots and history of France and French cuisine. I would not have been as happy in any other city because of the ease of every day life, wonderful people we met, and unbelievable cultural activities. Lyon is like a small town in a big city. You have the best of both worlds: seeing friendly faces on the way to school or at the local "Quickie Mart" and also experiencing large activities like watching a football game or seeing Bastille Day fireworks with thousands of other people. (Leah Corgel, FBT 2000)

I think the fact that the program takes place in LYON is important because it is not as bombarded with tourists as Paris is. It is easy to get by without knowing French in Paris, but in Lyon knowing French is a necessity. Additionally, in Lyon it is easy to really learn the culture of France and live like a real Frenchman or Frenchwoman. (Stephanie Sparks, FBT 2002)

#### AVAILABILITY AND CHOICE OF CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The possible cultural activities are endless in Lugdunum (the Roman name for Lyon). The former capital of Gaul (and birthplace of three Roman emperors) is home to around 20 museums (Gallo-Roman Museum, Fine Art Museum, Textile Museum, Urban Museum, Historical Center of the Resistance and Deportation . . .) and a variety of organized architectural visits in various part of the city. The city is one of the oldest (over 2000 years old) yet one of the most modern in France. This asset allows for a variety of cultural events to supplement the regularly scheduled company visits and guest speakers.

. . . Lyon [is] very wealthy in its culture and history. Lyon has a strong tradition in art, the silk industry, great food and is home to several museums of art as well as the history of the resistance in France. All these things really enriched our trip. I certainly learned a lot about the history of the area and the French culture. (Tracy Richards, FBT 2003)

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) awarded the city the prestigious status of World Heritage City in December 1998. It is the only city in France that has kept its structural heritage throughout the centuries because it was not built and rebuilt on itself which destroys past vestiges. Rather than that, from its original site on the hills of Fourvière during the pre-Roman and Roman era, it expanded to the Saône river during the medieval period (St. Paul and St. Jean), crossing in the eighteenth century to the Presque-Ile (portion of land between two bodies of water connected to the mainland on the opposite side of the confluence, in this case, of the Rhône and the Saône rivers) and expanding to the Croix-Rousse slopes. Finally the city crossed the Rhône river in the nineteenth century in the area surrounding the Parc de la Tête d'Or (one of the largest access free parks in Europe including its arboretum and zoological section), to keep developing in the modern quarter of La Part Dieu with a French version of an American-size mall.

The balance of history and modern industry remains a great environment for anyone looking to internationalize their college experience. (Matt Watkins, FBT 2001)

Every stage of the evolution of the city has been kept intact or restored, giving the students an excellent idea of the development of a French city throughout the ages. This helps convey the importance of the close and distant past in French culture, a past which is well reflected in the etymology of words as well as in the expressions and the references to history used in everyday conversation. These weekly on-site lessons were organized with the idea of keeping a balance between history, arts, culture, and local tradition.

To impress the students with the notion of history and culture that they will experience for six weeks, and to give them an overview of the city, the first visit of the program is an architectural and historical trip organized by a guide expert in these domains. Starting on Fourvière Hill, where they can see how the whole city is laid out, students go down the slopes and end up in the medieval area of St. Jean with its Italian-influenced architecture and its

*traboules* (secret passages between the streets which were made famous during World War II when the French Resistance acted secretly against the Nazis.) To follow up with this part of history, the next cultural activity is a visit to the Resistance and Deportation Historical Center, housed in what used to be the Gestapo headquarters during the German occupation; it is an extremely sobering and eye-opening experience. The most memorable part of the day is always after the visit, when a former resistant or a holocaust survivor comes as a guest speaker and interacts with the group of young Americans to share real-life experiences. It gives all the listeners a new perspective on personal priorities, on the concept of freedom and on the importance of life. The two activities dedicated to the arts are the visit to the Fine Art Museum and the Musée Urbain Tony Garnier, an exceptional outdoor museum representing the ideas, concepts, and dreams of the architect on murals spread throughout an entire neighborhood. Finally, the two local cultural visits are the Lyon City Hall and a Guignol play. Puppetry, originally created in Lyon for adults and now familiar to children, became an important part of French culture, even entering into the common language by giving birth to expressions such as *faire le Guignol* (to act stupidly).

#### BUSINESS AND COMPANY VISITS

Lyon has been known internationally as a business center since the Middle Ages. Italian merchants often came to sell and trade their fabrics in this crossroads city because of its geographical location at the confluence of two rivers forming the starting point of the Rhône Valley. The Italian merchants liked it so much there that they settled and helped build the area now known as St. Jean. The silk industry is what really triggered most of the modern commerce and manufacturing in the area. After the invention of the loom (by the Lyonnais Jacquard) in the eighteenth century, the canuts or silk workers represented the largest taskforce in Lyon. The textile industry and industries related to the transformation of material expanded in the twentieth century. Today Lyon is a chemical and pharmaceutical research and production center (Merial) as well as a crossroads for the petroleum industry (the French National Institute of Petroleum is located in Feyzin).

Selecting companies suitable to the program's aims and willing to open their doors takes a great deal of time, effort, diplomacy, and occasionally luck. Each year there is a balance between the number of financial, business, and technology-oriented visits. Regardless of their majors, students benefit from different aspects of the experience. The exchanges that ensue with the

management and the employees and those occurring during organized class discussion are extremely enriching. The Cr dit Lyonnais introduces students to the French banking industry and allows a visit to the original founding site and still the main office in Lyon. B\*Capital, the investment branch of the Banque National de Paris (BNP) explains the way the French stock market operates, and their brokers show to small groups of students what they do on a daily basis. The CFPB (Centre de Formation de la Profession Bancaire), a professional school dedicated to the formation of professionals within the banking industry, organizes and offers a half-day seminar on the history and operation of the banking system in France and Europe.

Three major technological companies have regularly welcomed the program since its inception. Merial, based in Lyon, is a worldwide renowned pharmaceutical company. It has its American headquarters in Athens, Georgia, and has been a very enthusiastic supporter. The visit to their animal vaccine production plant not only gives students a general concept of how a manufacturing plant is organized and works, but also briefly shows how a vaccine is made. Whether or not students have a biology major, the visit provides a valuable lesson on the organization and the security in a manufacturing plant and on the efforts made to preserve the environment. Environmental concerns are an extremely high priority for French industries, and American students are often surprised at the budget that companies allocate to address this problem. It comes as a shock to them that companies willingly spend any money to do their part to preserve the natural habitat if it is not mandated by governmental regulations. These choices have been emphasized by the hosts during the visits to the Bugey nuclear power plant, the recycling plant, and the French Institute of Petroleum research center.

Other business visits have included Vibrafrance, representative of a small but expanding family business with international aspirations. Paul Bocuse, France's most famous chef, has his main operation in Lyon with a few other restaurants in France and internationally, and is also involved in various international enterprises associated with the food and wine industry. Students appreciate hearing his amazing business success story and experience the privileged and rarely authorized visit into the kitchens and the private upstairs dining room.

An example of a visit that can be considered beneficial for its management aspect and its civic and cultural interests is the half day spent with the mayor of a small French town during which the students have a short course on local politics (becoming a mayor in France and a mayor's duties), a short

management course (managing a city), and a historical overview of the area. The favorite visit for the great majority of students is the tour of Widescreen Games. This company, started by two young, former employees of Infogramme (a computer game designing company) has now over forty employees and changed office locations three times since our first meeting. From game conception and design, implementation and programming, to the packaging stage of the product, students have the opportunity to understand how a product such as a videogame is developed. The now customary dinner with the company is an occasion for the students to interact in an informal setting with the very people they saw at work during the day. Every company makes a genuine effort not only to share their knowledge but also to convey their sympathy toward Americans.

EDF (Electricité de France) makes a point of flying the American flag on the day of the visit, and the positive coverage by the company magazine (Merial) or by the local newspapers of the area (Miribel, next to Lyon) is a great way to show students that Franco-American relations can be important at any level. Indeed, a country's media does not always reflect the whole picture when it comes to public opinion. These company visits, in addition to the educational and sociocultural benefits to the student, also provide positive exposure and help spread the reputation of Georgia Tech.

These examples are given as a source of inspiration for other programs. The possibilities are of course endless; what is important to keep in mind before organizing such visits is what the students will get out of them. The difficulty in scheduling comes from the fact that some of these companies have a high level of security involved, they do not all allow group visits and even if from one year to the next it becomes easier, securing these sometime entails a lot of negotiating and good rapport.

Developing a good relationship with the companies is essential and involves much more than a phone call to set up the visit and another one to thank the hosting companies (all of them receive the group free of charge). Briefing the students before each visit is important. There is no dress code but it is a mark of respect to avoid wearing shorts, T-shirts, or tennis shoes during the visits. Not all students have the same background and are necessarily aware of this; the program can, in these cases, provide an introduction to social etiquette. Inappropriate behavior is very rarely a problem but needs to be discussed prior to the visits. Showing the group's gratitude by offering a small token of appreciation to the individual assigned to the group, such as an official commemorative plaque dedicated to the company or an official

thank-you letter, may seem trivial but cannot be overlooked. All of these gestures reflect and help the image of the university but also the image of the United States. Everyone gains in the experience. The host company and the students will gain each others' respect and will convey a positive message.

#### GUEST SPEAKERS: PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE FROM REAL WORKING PEOPLE

Even though the program usually runs from the last week of June until the end of July, we always manage to find a large numbers of volunteers among the few people still working during this period of national vacation. French people are delighted to interact with Americans even though they are at first sometimes reluctant to talk about themselves and what they do (more because they wonder why people would want to know than because they do not want to share). After the period of getting to know each other during lunch, they realize that they have a rare chance to show how they really live, not how they are depicted in the foreign media.

The company visits and lunch guests that are unique to this program aid in this learning process. Furthermore, the visits and business guests at lunch supplement a person's education in corporate etiquette and knowledge in conversing with business executives. (Stephanie Sparks, FBT 2002)

There are a lot of study abroad programs where students do not come away with a strong grasp on the language because they spent most of their time with their fellow American students. FBT in Lyon is different. [Our instructor] made SURE that we always had a French person to talk to, and even organized lunches where we HAD to sit with one or two French people, and therefore we were forced to practice. I thought this was great. Getting over the fear of speaking a new language in a new country is difficult, and this process made it easier and more comfortable. Towards the end of the program, I started realizing how much of the French language I really absorbed. It became a speaking language for me, and I even started thinking a little in French (the little that I think . . .). (Tali Padan, FBT 2002)

Guest speakers are chosen to represent a variety of professions. This helps to show what background is necessary, or not, to achieve a certain professional level on the French job market. Examples of some of the guest speakers in the past years have been: a city employee, a flight attendant, a doctor, a

residence manager, a business manager, various representatives of the computer industry, engineers, financial advisors, an SNCF (French national railway) manager and a teacher.

#### AN EDGE ON THE GLOBAL JOB MARKET

“These programs are very likely instrumental in helping students take a major step toward understanding the importance of their career goal in their lives, or deciding that they do not want to dedicate their energies to the field that they had initially chosen” (Hannigan). The students themselves realize what they have acquired by participating in this program.

Academically it has benefited me tremendously and in my efforts to get into law school and my job search, my French skills will prove invaluable. (Tracy Richards, FBT 2003)

My participation in the FBT program has greatly improved my marketability and resume strength. Employers are impressed not only by my work to become proficient in another language, but also by the practical experience I gained from visiting companies and discussing business issues that affect all companies in our global marketplace. (Angela Dobson, FBT 2003 and 2004)

Students also get positive feedback at the interview level from recruiters for their study abroad work:

The FBT was pivotal in my college experience. The experience has qualified me for several career opportunities. All of my co-op and internship interviewers asked questions about the study abroad and commented on how beneficial such experience would be for me in the business world. In particular, when I was interviewing for the Operation Management Leadership Program for GE Healthcare, a position with over one hundred applicants for five positions, I was asked to comment on my study abroad. After discussing some of the company visits as well as the appreciation I had gained for French culture, the interviewers began to tell me about some of their experiences in France while working for GE. I will never know if that was my distinguishing factor from the other applicants, but I got the position and start in July. There is the possibility that I will be sent to France for awhile after one year in Milwaukee. (Sarah Jackson, FBT 2000)

In some cases the program has been a pivotal element in obtaining an international position, as the next three testimonies show.

Finally, I must say it [FBT] contributed greatly to procuring my current career, opening the North American division for CTC (Centre Technique Cuir Chaussure Maroquinerie), headquartered in Lyon. By participating in FBT, it demonstrated my willingness to work in a diverse, complex, and changing environment. (Paul Ross, FBT 2003, N. America Operations Mgr CTC, Centre Technique Cuir Chaussure Maroquinerie)

Currently, I work closely with a components manufacturer (Thales) based in Velizy, France. Before that, I was offered a job with Equant, a French telecommunications company. (Cristina Casanova, FBT 2001)

The FBT program in Lyon has been extremely beneficial to my post-graduate career. Aside from improving my language skills exponentially, the program also introduced me to Merial, my current employer. After touring Merial's impressive manufacturing facility in Lyon, I pursued a job opportunity in the US and was subsequently hired upon graduation. This program provided opportunities to interact with European companies that would not have otherwise existed. (Lee Wall, FBT 2000)

The program not only benefits the student who participated in the program and their future employment but other, future generations of college students whether or not they already are at that level.

Thanks to the FBT program, I have imparted my knowledge of France and the French culture to the students, enriching their learning experience and enabling me to teach the subject with greater authority. This has also helped in making me a desired and busy substitute for French teachers. (Daniel West, FBT 2001)

It is clear that the need and demand for such program are growing as the international job market expands. The number of participants increased from twelve the first year to twenty selected a couple of years later. The only limitation to the size of the group has been imposed by the companies' willingness to host more than sixteen students. For some, it disturbs their routine and their space, for others it is a matter of security and insurance. It is encouraging and gratifying to observe that the results are almost immediate.



These types of programs not only benefit everyone involved but are also excellent for international relations.

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